



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



SGT DANIEL BUSSE BRIDGE DEDICATED

This week, veterans, family members, and community leaders gathered in Highmore to dedicate the SGT Daniel Busse Memorial Bridge. The Busse Bridge is located on SD HWY 14 near Harrold, South Dakota.

Busse died in hostile gunfire on September 1, 1968, while serving in South Vietnam Quang Ngai (province).

"It is our sacred duty to keep his legacy fresh in the memories of future generations; for his service is the cornerstone of our great nation," said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.

Guest speakers for the dedication were: SDDVA Secretary Whitlock, LTC LeeJay Templeton, and Dan's sister Cheryl Fawcett.

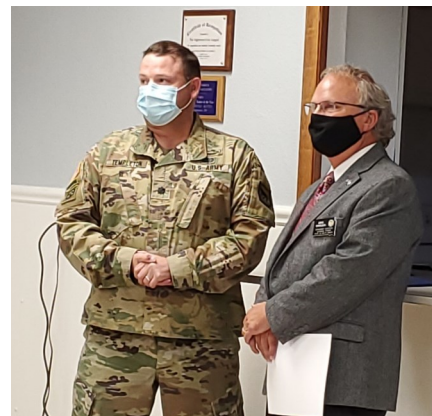
The dedication is part of a Fallen Heroes Program led by the South Dakota Departments of Veterans Affairs, Military, and Transportation.

"What a great way to honor our veterans and share their respective story," said Whitlock.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

SDNG Best Warriors.....	2
Property Tax Deadline	3
Day of the Deployed	3
152nd Change of Command	4
196th Change of Command	5
1-196th Change of Command.....	6
Social Security COLA	7
Shaffer Leaving SDDVA	7
CJTFHOA	8
Health Records	9
Caregivers at the Fore Front.....	10
Heroes and History Makers.....	11
BHSU Appreciation Game.....	12
Upcoming Events.....	13



SD GUARD SOLDIERS COMPETE IN STATE BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

Ten South Dakota Army National Guard soldiers competed in the state's Best Warrior Competition at West Camp Rapid in Rapid City, Oct. 2-4.

Battalions from across the state sent soldiers to compete for the title of SDARNG's Soldier of the Year or Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

The soldiers are scored in a variety of physically and mentally taxing tasks and assessments. Some events are the Army Combat Fitness Test, weapons qualification, obstacle course, night land navigation, a seven-mile ruck march, and round-robin training lanes that individually assess their mental and physical limits, as well as their soldier skills and readiness.

According to Sgt. Maj. Travis Vallery, one of the event coordinators for Joint Force Headquarters, competitions like these are put on to reward soldiers for their hard work, to seek the best of the best, and to develop leaders so they can take this experience back with them to their units and be mentors and leaders there.

Once scores were tallied, Sgt. Gregory Mehlbrech, of Hartford, with the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion, was announced as the 2021 Soldier of the Year and Sgt. Mackenzie Harvey, of Huron, with the 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, was announced as the NCO of the Year.

The winners will move on to represent the SDARNG in the Region 6 competition against soldiers from seven other states next spring in Oregon.

The other participants in this year's competition include: Spc. Jacob Hernandez, 153rd Engineering Battalion; Spc. Zachariah Brown, 109th Regional Support Group; Spc. Lydia Raderschadt, 881st Troop Command; Spc. Aaron Hunt, 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion; Sgt. Mackenzie Miller, 1-147th: Field Artillery; Sgt. Nathan Alexander, Joint Force Headquarters; Staff Sgt. Cooper Stanforth, Training Center; and Sgt. Kimberly Meyer, 881st Troop Command.



DEADLINE APPROACHING FOR DISABLED VETERAN PROPERTY TAX PROGRAM

The Nov. 1, 2020, deadline for eligible disabled veterans to apply for property tax relief is approaching.

The South Dakota Department of Revenue's Disabled Veteran's Program exempts the first \$150,000 of valuation on an eligible applicant's property. The program also applies to surviving spouses of disabled veterans if they have not remarried. Once approved, this exemption will automatically continue until the property changes ownership or is not owner occupied.

To qualify for the program, applicants must meet both of the following criteria:

- The veteran must be rated as permanently and totally disabled as a result of a service-connected disability, and
- The veteran or a surviving spouse, who is not remarried, must own and occupy the property.

Applicants will be required to provide proof of their eligibility to receive the exemption, which may be obtained by calling the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000.

If approved, applicants will receive their first reduction in their property taxes payable in 2022. Applications can be accessed from their county Director of Equalization or on the Department of Revenue's website at <https://dor.sd.gov/individuals/taxes/property-tax/relief-programs/#veterans>. If you have questions, feel free to call our Property Tax Agents at 1-800-829-9188 (Option 2).

DAY OF THE DEPLOYED

October 26th is designated as "National Day of the Deployed," honoring our military personnel deployed around the globe.

This day is a great opportunity to honor our deployed troops and their families for their bravery and the sacrifices they are making for our country. Each deployed troop leaves behind a family whether it is a spouse and children, parents and siblings, grandparents, or all of the above, and even though they are not deployed, military families are making sacrifices and deserve to be recognized too. By recognizing a deployed's family, you are honoring the troops too.

Ways to honor: send cards and letters thanking our troops, mail a care package to a deployed service member, buy groceries for a soldier's family, mow the families lawn, or display a yellow ribbon.

No matter what type of gesture you choose, all that matters is that your gesture is heartfelt. Large or small, inexpensive or expensive, every act of kindness makes a difference in the lives of those deployed troops and their families and shows your support for them.

KLEINSCHMIT TAKES COMMAND OF 152ND CSSB

Lt. Col. Jason Kleinschmit, of Tea, assumed command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion during a ceremony at the Pierre National Guard Armory, Oct. 3.

Kleinschmit took over command from Lt. Col. Dave Moore, of Rapid City, who led the battalion since October 2018. Moore is now assigned as the G4 deputy logistics officer for Joint Force Headquarters.

As commander, Kleinschmit is now responsible for overseeing the command and control, administrative, logistics and training support of the battalion's four assigned units and detachments located in six communities throughout the state.

Kleinschmit began his military career in August 1994 with the U.S. Army, enlisting as a motor vehicle operator stationed with the 546th Transportation Company at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. After three years of service, he joined the SDARNG. In 2000, Kleinschmit enrolled in Officer Candidate School and received his commission as a second lieutenant in October 2001. He was branched as a transportation officer and assigned as a platoon leader with the 727th Transportation Company.

Kleinschmit has held numerous command and staff positions throughout his career. He served in various positions such as maintenance officer, 88th Troop Command; operations officer and support operations officer in the 139th Brigade Support Battalion; plans officer and personnel officer in the 109th Regional Support Group; protection chief in the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, and defense movement coordinator in Joint Force Headquarters.

Kleinschmit also served as detachment commander for the 665th Maintenance Company and Headquarters Company, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, and as commander for Company B, 139th BSB. Kleinschmit is a combat veteran and deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003-2004. In his civilian career, Kleinschmit works as a field superintendent with Jans Corporation in Sioux Falls.



BARTUNEK TAKES COMMAND OF 196TH REGIMENT

Col. Deborah Bartunek, of Rapid City, took command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) during a change of command ceremony at Fort Meade, Oct. 3.

Bartunek assumed command from Col. Patrick Stapleton, who served in the position since December 2018.

"I am truly honored to have been selected to command the 196th Regiment," said Bartunek. "This regiment has a tremendous responsibility, not just to the South Dakota National Guard, but to the entire nation. We train leaders of the future from across the nation, directly impacting the nation's readiness for years to come."

As commander, Bartunek is responsible for the command and control of the 196th Regiment and its two subordinate battalions - 1st Battalion at Fort Meade and 2nd Battalion in Sioux Falls - which provide instruction on various military courses such as officer candidate school, warrant officer candidate school, and multiple launch rocket system courses.

Bartunek has over 37 years of service in the SDARNG. She first enlisted in April 1983 in the 147th Army Band in Mitchell. In 1991, she received her commission from the South Dakota Military Academy's Officer Candidate School and appointed as a second lieutenant in the Transportation Corps.

Over the course of her career, Bartunek has served in a variety of command and staff positions to include: 1742nd Transportation Company platoon leader; 88th Troop Command personnel officer, 196th Regiment operations and logistics officer; and the 109th Regional Support Group's administrative officer and deputy commander positions. She also served as the commander of the 665th Maintenance Company and as commander of 1st Battalion, 196th RTI.

On the civilian side, Bartunek works as a full time federal technician for the SDARNG as the deputy chief of staff for logistics for Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City. Bartunek holds a Bachelor of Education degree from South Dakota State University and a Master in Business Administration from Tourou University International and a Masters of Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College.



1-196TH REGIMENT CHANGES COMMAND

Lt. Col. Matthew Symonds, of Spearfish, took command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) during a change of command ceremony at Fort Meade, Sept. 13.

Symonds assumed command from Lt. Col. Troy Ness, who served in the position since July 2018.

As commander, Symonds is now responsible for the planning, execution and support of the officer candidate school program and their eight subordinate OCS companies, as well as warrant officer candidate school.

"I am very blessed to have been selected for this position and very humbled by the soldiers I will be working with," said Symonds. "Training the nation's future leaders is a responsibility I do not take lightly, and I encourage my staff to live by 'being the example.'"

Symonds has over 32 years of service in the SDARNG. He first enlisted into the U.S. Army in August 1989 as a communications specialist stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. He transferred into the SDARNG in February 1992. In 1999, Symonds received a commission as a second lieutenant upon completion of the ROTC program.

Symonds has served in a variety of command and staff positions throughout his career, to include commander of both the 854th Quartermaster Company and 1978th Contingency Contracting Team. He also served in combat and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as a platoon leader in the 842nd Engineer Company in 2003 and to Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012 with the 1978th CCT as the regional contracting chief deputy.

On the civilian side, Symonds is the business services and contract manager for the Sanford Underground Research Facility in Lead. He also works as a law enforcement officer with the Lawrence County Sheriff's Office and Deadwood Police Department on a part-time basis.

Symonds holds a Bachelor of Science degree in business from Black Hills State University.



SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS INCREASE IN 2021

Approximately 70 million Americans will see a 1.3 percent increase in their Social Security benefits and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments in 2021. Federal benefit rates increase when the cost-of-living rises, as measured by the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index (CPI-W).

The CPI-W rises when inflation increases, leading to a higher cost-of-living. This change means prices for goods and services, on average, are a little more expensive, so the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) helps to offset these costs.

January 2021 marks other changes that will happen based on the increase in the national average wage index. For example, the maximum amount of earnings subject to Social Security payroll tax in 2021 will be higher. The retirement earnings test exempt amount [will also change in 2021.](#)

You can find more information about the 2021 COLA [here.](#)



SHAFFER LEAVING SDDVA

SDDVA's Sheila Shaffer will be leaving the Department to start a new venture in her life. Shaffer will be heading to the Hills and will be working in the Pennington County Sheriff's office. Shaffer said, "she hopes to never see any of her past coworkers there in any other capacity then just stopping in to say 'hi!'"

When asked about her time at SDDVA, Shaffer shared this; "I absolutely adore these ladies, and love what this department does and stands for! I feel so blessed to have been a part of the groundbreaking for the new cemetery, what an honor! I have been with the Department for three and a half years and have loved coming to work each and every day. I love the passion that is shown by each and every staff member and service officer for our veterans. "

Please join SDDVA in wishing Sheila and Dan the very best in the next chapter of their life.



NEW STAFF ARRIVES AT CJTF-HOA

Nearly 200 soldiers from the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, of Sioux Falls, South Dakota Army National Guard became the new headquarters staff after arriving at Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), Sept. 25.

When CJTF-HOA as a headquarters was initially conceived, it was built out of individual augmentees from every different service. With a high turnover rate and continuity challenges - CJTF-HOA looked for a solution.

CJTF-HOA was looking for a single unit solution that could perform headquarters functions, deploy as a unit, and perform turnover with other like units less frequently -- the initial finding was that a maneuver enhancement brigade would be the solution.

CJTF-HOA is a dynamic operational headquarters, effectively supporting partner nations' efforts in countering violent extremist organizations in East Africa.

More than 5,000 personnel are assigned to CJTF-HOA headquarters and contingency locations throughout the Horn of Africa. The team is uniquely diverse and is represented by personnel from different service branches and partner nations, making CJTF-HOA truly a joint forces command.

CJTF-HOA is staffed by service members from the U.S. Army, with the greatest number of personnel, followed, in descending number, by civilians and contractors, Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy, coalition partners and Coast Guard.

When U.S. forces first started at Camp Lemonnier until now, there have been many points of transition and mission sets evolving, and this is just a natural progression and developmental opportunity.



FEDERAL ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD MODERNIZATION

The [Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization \(FEHRM\)](#) program office announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) expanded their joint health information exchange (HIE) network with the private sector, Oct. 9, after connecting with the [CommonWell Health Alliance](#).

CommonWell brings a nationwide network of more than 15,000 hospitals and clinics to the 46,000 community partners already part of the joint HIE.

Launched earlier this year, the joint HIE is a modernized health data sharing capability that enhances the ability of VA, DOD, and USCG to quickly and securely share electronic health record (EHR) data bidirectionally with participating community health care providers. The result provides more informed care for patients who are navigating between different health care providers.

"The CommonWell connection means VA, DOD, and USCG providers can access more information about their patients to make the best care decisions," said FEHRM Director William Tinston. "The FEHRM drives federal capabilities, such as the expanded joint HIE to improve health care delivery, regardless of where patients get care."

Through the joint HIE, providers may access information on their patients' prescriptions, allergies, illnesses, lab and radiology results, immunizations, past medical procedures, and medical notes.

"As a clinician who is using the joint HIE, the more patient information I have access to, the more I can understand the full picture of my patient's care and better meet their needs," said VA primary care physician and clinical leader with the FEHRM Dr. Neil Evans. "During the COVID-19 pandemic, efficient electronic health information sharing is more important than ever."

The joint HIE's integration with the CommonWell network of providers is part of the overarching effort within VA, DOD, and USCG to modernize and deploy a single, common federal EHR. By implementing the same EHR —VA, DOD, and USCG can better document care from the time individuals enter the military through their care as Veterans, including care they may receive in the private sector — viewable through the joint HIE.

The joint HIE honors patient consent. Health records of patients who opt out of sharing will not be exchanged through the joint HIE.



**Federal Electronic Health Record
Modernization Program Office**

SUPPORTING CAREGIVERS IN TIMES OF CHALLENGE

Being a military caregiver is tough. But being a military caregiver during a global pandemic unimaginable. The Elizabeth Dole Foundation and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting the 5th Annual National Convening, *"Caregivers at the Forefront."* This free, virtual event is open to all on October 19th at 1:00 p.m. — 4:30 p.m. EST and will offer a timely national discussion around the emerging issues in caregiving as a result of these challenging times.

Presented by Philips, the convening will include special remarks by Senator Elizabeth Dole, The Honorable VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, and more. Keynote Addresses will be given by Dr. Anthony Fauci and Emmy Award-winning Fox News Anchor Harris Faulkner.

Our nation's hidden heroes continue to answer the call to serve our wounded warriors throughout the most challenging times in history. For too long their service and sacrifice has remained hidden behind closed doors.

The event is virtual and free to the public. Sign up for #EDFVAConvening2020 at www.edfvaconvening2020.org.

5th Annual National Virtual Convening

October 19th

Caregivers at the Forefront

Featuring special guests



Dr. Anthony Fauci



Sec. Robert Wilkie



Sen. Elizabeth Dole



Harris Faulkner

3RD ANNUAL HEROES AND HISTORY MAKERS

Military caregivers are resilient, and on October 20th at 8:00 PM EST, the Elizabeth Dole Foundation will share their stories of hope and perseverance during the 3rd Annual Heroes and History Makers. In telling their stories, we ensure the individuals who care for those who answered the call to serve our country never have to face their challenges alone.

Join Senator Elizabeth Dole, the presenting sponsor USAA, and special guests including Hidden Heroes Campaign Chair Tom Hanks, Hidden Heroes Ambassador Savannah Guthrie, Adam Driver, Darius Rucker, Hilary Swank, Jocko Sims, Nico Santos, Tim McGraw, Geena Davis, Joe Mantegna, Wilson Cruz and others for an evening of inspiration, hope, and unity.

Please join the Elizabeth Dole Foundation on October 20th at 8:00pm EST for their Third Annual Heroes and History Makers Gala—free, online, and open to all—honoring our nation’s hidden heroes who care for wounded warriors at home. Through this star-studded, virtual celebration, they will share the inspirational stories of hope and sacrifice of America’s military caregivers, and salute the resilience and strength of this community. In telling their stories, we ensure the individuals who care for those who answered the call to serve our country never have to face their challenges alone.

The event is virtual and free for all. Sign up today at www.hhm2020.org.

	<h2>HEROES AND HISTORY MAKERS</h2> <p><i>Celebrate Our Community of Caregivers Virtually on October 20, 2020</i></p>				
 Sen. Elizabeth Dole	 Tom Hanks	 Savannah Guthrie	 Darius Rucker	 Tim McGraw	 Wilson Cruz
 Joe Mantegna	 Adam Driver	 Jocko Sims	 Hilary Swank	 Nico Santos	 Geena Davis

★ ★ ★ HERO ★ ★ ★ APPRECIATION GAME



NOV. 7, 2020 | 1 PM



BHSU
FOOTBALL GAME
ATTENTION HEROES

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
• BHSU Athletics would like to invite all Veterans, Active Military Personnel, Law Enforcement, Firefighters, and EMS Personnel to the "Hero Appreciation Game" as the Yellow Jacket football team hosts South Dakota Mines at 1 PM at Lyle Hare Stadium in Spearfish. You are **strongly** encouraged to wear a mask during this event. Pay attention to signs in the stadium regarding social distancing and mitigation procedures. For more information regarding these safety procedures, visit: www.BHSU.edu/COVID.



Persons with disabilities requesting accommodations for this event can contact Colleen Mischke at 605-642-6269 or email: Colleen.Mischke@BHSU.edu.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 17—Gallantly Forward 2020 Gala—Rushmore Plaza Civic Center—Rapid City—5:00 pm (MT)
Oct 21—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Sioux Falls
Nov 7—BHSU Hero Appreciation Game—Lyle Hare Stadium—Spearfish—1:00 pm (MT)
Nov 11—SSG Jason W. Montefering and SGT Jeremiah Boehmer Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Parkston High School Auditorium—9:00 am (CT)
Nov 11—State Offices are closed
Nov 13—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs VAMC—10:00 am (MT)
Nov 13—Virtual Legal Clinic—9:00 am—5:00 pm (CT)
Nov 26-27—State Offices are closed
Dec 1—Governor’s State of the Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)
Dec 24-25—State Offices are closed
Jan 12—Governor’s State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 13—SDDVA/SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/default.html>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue

Pierre, SD 57501

Phone: 605-773-8242

E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

